

# North Country Trail

National Scenic Trail  
ND, MN, WI, MI, OH, PA, NY

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



Backpackers pass Au Sable Point Light Station in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan

Michigan's Tahquamenon Falls is the largest waterfall along the trail

Lake Itasca, Minnesota, source of the Mississippi River

Hikers on the Finger Lakes Trail near Bath, New York

St. Croix Flowage at the head of St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, Wisconsin

Hikers will enjoy many scenic views in New York's Finger Lakes Region

Our northern tier of States offers some of the most outstanding scenic beauty to be found anywhere in America. The “North Country” is a land of diversity whose beauty is accentuated by its distinctly changing seasons. As you travel the North Country, the hills and valleys, lakes and streams, show how the glaciers molded the landscape. Historic sites along the way tell the story of how America was settled and grew as a nation.

The North Country National Scenic Trail is being created as a way to enjoy these natural and cultural resources. Come to the land of clear-flowing streams . . . the red and gold display of autumn . . . winter's fairyland of ice-glazed trees . . . to sandy beaches and whispering grass. Listen to the echoes of voyageurs' songs and watch for the northern lights as you lie in your tent beside a serene lake. As you enjoy each segment of the trail, you will take with you lasting images of the North Country.

## A Trail to Great Adventure

Threading its way across our landscape, the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST) links outstanding scenic, natural, recreational, historic, and cultural areas in seven of our northern States. Some portions of the trail invite easy walking, while others provide challenge, but everywhere the trail offers adventure.

Unlike the Appalachian, Pacific Crest, and Continental Divide NSTs, which follow mountain ranges, the North Country NST journeys through a variety of environments in the northeastern and north central United States. From the grandeur of the Adirondack Mountains in New York, it meanders westward through the hardwood forests of Pennsylvania, through the countryside of Ohio and southern Michigan, along the shores of the Great Lakes, and through the glacier-carved forests, lakes, and streams of northern Wisconsin and Minnesota. Its western terminus lies in the vast plains of North Dakota.

The North Country NST answers the call of hikers and other trail users for pathways on which to escape from hectic lives—for a chance to explore America at a walking pace, rather than at freeway speeds. North Country Trail users are discovering places where they can look out over forested hills

and valleys, places where the beautiful work of nature's hand appears undiminished, and places where our rich and diverse cultural heritage can be understood, enjoyed, and relived.

The North Country Trail exists as much for the enjoyment of the casual walker as it does for the challenge of those who will travel its entire length. Whether you use it for an afternoon of walking, a day of cross-country skiing, or a week or month of backpacking, you will find adventure as you encounter and explore forested pathways, marshes and bogs, waterfalls, sand dunes, tallgrass prairies, old logging railroad grades, lighthouses, Revolutionary War forts, and small rural communities. From the Missouri River in North Dakota to the shore of Lake Champlain in New York, the diverse features along the trail will help users understand how the land was formed, how it has been settled, and how it has been used and altered by humans.

This diversity of landscapes and scenic and historic features along the North Country NST is perhaps its most appealing quality. Large areas of publicly owned lands, such as national forests, major State parks and forests, and Adirondack Park in New York, offer wilderness and

near-wilderness experiences. These remote sections of the trail will be especially enjoyable to those who value the solitude of such areas. A journey through these remote areas also rewards trail users with outstanding scenery, such as in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Michigan, where 44 miles of the trail follow the Lake Superior shoreline with its Grand Sable Dunes, Twelvemile Beach, and Pictured Rocks cliffs.

Somewhat in contrast to the remote sections are the portions of the trail which pass through or near many small villages and towns and a few large cities. These communities offer access to the trail, lodging and other accommodations, opportunities for resupply for long-distance users, and interesting cultural features associated with their history.

Water has left a spectacular imprint on the North Country. Glacial ice sculpted the basins of our Great Lakes, cut valleys, and left behind numerous rivers and lakes. Today, water is still at work carving our landscape. The North Country Trail takes hikers to scenic gorges such as Watkins Glen in New York, Slippery Rock Creek in Pennsylvania, Old Man's Cave in Ohio, and the St. Louis River in Minnesota. The sight and sound of

waterfalls will be a frequent greeting to trail users, particularly in Upper Michigan and Wisconsin. The North Country's rivers and lakes will become favorite companions, especially at the end of a day when camp is made.

The scenic beauty of the natural resources along the trail is complemented by the many cultural features. Trail users can pause and marvel at the prehistoric Indian earthworks along the trail in Ohio. All along the trail, North Country NST

travelers are reminded of the original inhabitants of this region by the many locations that still carry names given to them by American Indians and recorded by European explorers and traders.

No less marvelous than the ancient Indian earthworks are marvels of modern engineering to be encountered along the trail, such as Michigan's 5-mile-long Mackinac Bridge, spanning the waters between its two peninsulas, or North Dakota's Garrison Dam near the western terminus of the North Country NST. In between our ancient yesterdays and the present is a spectrum of history that can be enjoyed along the North Country Trail through visible remnants and interpretive facilities—historic forts, canals, lighthouses, and grist mills; sites of logging and mining camps; portage routes of the voyageurs; and much more. All are waiting to be explored and to tell their story to trail users.

The North Country NST is becoming one of our country's major trails, offering unparalleled opportunities to enjoy a cross-section of America's rich natural and cultural heritage. Come visit the North Country . . . by trail. Whether on foot, snowshoes, or skis, great adventure lies just ahead.



Fort Stanwix National Monument, Rome, New York

Wright Brothers Memorial, Ohio

Lake Ashtabula, North Dakota

McConells Mill State Park, Pennsylvania

Nature's splendor awaits discovery along the trail

Superior Hiking Trail, Minnesota

Brule River State Forest, Wisconsin

Miami and Erie Canal, Piqua Historical Area, Ohio

The trail offers enjoyment and adventure in all seasons

## Creating and Completing the Trail

Through the combined efforts of many people, the North Country NST will become the longest continuous trail in the United States. Although it will take many years to complete, trail users are already enjoying over 2,000 miles open to public use. Completed segments vary in length from 1 mile to over 300 miles.

The North Country Trail began as a U.S. Forest Service proposal in the mid-1960's. In 1968, Congress passed legislation creating the National Trails System. The legislation designated two existing trails—the Appalachian and the Pacific Crest—as the first national scenic trails. The Department of the Interior was directed to study the possibility of establishing other proposed trail routes, including the North Country Trail, as national scenic trails. The study report, completed in 1975, recommended that Congress enact legislation authorizing the North Country Trail to be

established as a component of the National Trails System.

In March 1980, Congress passed the necessary legislation and created the North Country National Scenic Trail. In doing so, Congress brought national attention to the outstanding scenic and recreational values of the trail and its route. As work on the trail has progressed, it appears that the final length will approach 4,600 miles, instead of the originally estimated 3,200 miles. The National Park Service administers the trail in cooperation with other Federal, State, and local agencies, private organizations, and individuals, including many generous landowners. Its administrative responsibilities include ensuring the development, protection, and maintenance of the trail; coordinating the activities of the many public agencies, private organizations, and individuals involved in the work; and providing technical and

limited financial assistance to cooperating interests.

The provisions of the National Trails System Act require that the actual work of developing, managing, and protecting the various segments of the North Country NST be a cooperative effort involving many agencies at all levels of government as well as private interests. Private volunteer trail organizations and individuals will have to accomplish most, if not all, of the work of developing and maintaining segments of the trail.

Over 1,750 miles of trail have been certified by the National Park Service as part of the North Country NST. Certification indicates the segment is developed and managed in accordance with the National Trails System Act and the comprehensive management plan for the trail. Certification entitles a segment to be marked with the official trail

emblem. Several hundred additional miles of uncertified segments are open to public use. A map of existing and future segments of the trail is found on the reverse side of this brochure.

### Your Help Is Needed

The story of the North Country Trail has only begun to be written. It is being written by dedicated public officials, citizen volunteers, and private landowners captivated by the vision of the trail and the many experiences it will offer to those who follow it in quest of the North Country's scenic treasures. You can help write that story by becoming involved as a volunteer, joining in the effort to build, promote, and maintain sections of the trail.

Several major trail organizations assist the National Park Service and other public land managing agencies in developing, protecting, and maintaining

the North Country NST. The North Country Trail Association was formed in 1981 to organize and coordinate the massive volunteer effort necessary to establish and maintain segments across private lands, as well as assist public agencies in establishing segments on their lands. The association works closely with the National Park Service in promoting development and use of the trail.

The National Park Service and the association work closely with major State level organizations dedicated to building and maintaining the North Country Trail in their States: the Kekekabic Trail Club, Minnesota Rovers, and Superior Hiking Trail Association in Minnesota; the Buckeye Trail Association in Ohio; the Finger Lakes Trail Conference in New York. Contact information for each of these groups is on the reverse side of this brochure.

You can help establish, promote, and protect the North Country NST by joining or supporting the efforts of these organizations or other local groups working on the trail. Membership and other information can be obtained by going to their websites or calling the number listed. Landowners along the route of the trail can make a significant contribution by giving permission for the trail to cross their lands or by donating lands or easements for the trail. Financial contributions can help support and accelerate the activities associated with establishing and maintaining the trail. Donations of money, land, and easements may qualify as tax-deductible gifts. For more information, contact the National Park Service or the cooperating organizations.

## Footprints of History in the North Country



Blocks of sod cut from the deep topsoil of the grasslands were used by settlers to build temporary homes on the treeless plains of America's heartland. These "soddies" offered shelter from the intense heat or bitter cold until lumber could be imported from the

flourishing mills around the Great Lakes. (Source: State Historical Society of North Dakota)

Logging was winter work as lumber crews cut the great pines and loaded them onto sleds. The trail was iced with water to enable horses to pull immense loads to staging areas along rivers for the spring log drives. Contests developed between crews to

see which camp could stack and haul the heaviest load. One prize load weighed over 50 tons. (Source: Wisconsin Historical Society)

As the twentieth century was dawning, the booming lumber industry in the Great Lakes area was beginning to die out. Cutover lands and remaining timberlands were promoted and sold as high quality farmlands. Many heartbroken families abandoned their land when

their persistent efforts to farm these sandy soils proved fruitless. (Source: Wisconsin Historical Society)

Immigrants from Cornwall, England, and other areas of Europe brought their mining knowledge to America. Their skills found ready employment underground, such as in the iron and copper mines of northern Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. In mining and other

fields of employment, the wages earned by the immigrants enabled them to send passage for numerous relatives to join them. (Source: University of Michigan)

The opening of New York's Erie Canal in 1825 spurred the development of vast networks of canals in the Northeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Great Lakes regions. Marvelous feats of engineering, they flourished as water highways to carry immigrants westward and goods to

Eastern markets until the advent of the railroad. Many remnants and restored sections can be enjoyed along the trail today. (Source: Ohio Historical Society)

## Enjoying the Trail

Many different public agencies and private interests are participating in the development and management of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NST). For this reason, users must be aware that the type and width of the trail tread, the support facilities available such as campsites, and rules and regulations governing use of the trail will vary from segment to segment.

North Country Trail users are urged to show their appreciation for the voluntary public and private efforts to develop and manage the trail by using it and related facilities properly and complying with any applicable rules and regulations. Users should be especially careful to respect the rights of private property owners—those who have generously allowed the trail to cross their land and those who live adjacent to publicly owned segments. Please stay on the trail, especially when crossing private lands.

**Trail Marking.** Certified segments of the North Country NST are signed with the marker shown on the map side of this brochure. These are supplemented by other types of markings, such as paint blazes, and routed wooden signs that provide distance and directional information. Other segments not yet certified are marked similarly, but lack the official North Country NST symbol.

**Permitted Uses.** All segments of the North Country NST are open to travel by foot for walking, hiking, and backpacking. Other non-motorized uses, including cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and jogging, are generally permitted. On limited segments, bicycling and horseback riding is allowed if the trail has been specifically designed to withstand such use. For information on which segments are open to other uses besides foot travel, write to the National Park Service or the local managing authority.

**Fees and Permits.** The use of some segments of the North Country Trail and overnight facilities requires payment of a fee and/or obtaining a permit. For example, a permit must be obtained to camp at backcountry campsites along the North Country Trail in Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. A permit is also required to use the segment in Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota. Fees are required to camp at many developed Federal, State, and county campsites. Users should check with managing authorities in advance to determine if permits and/or fees are required.

**Camping.** Facilities for camping along the North Country Trail vary greatly. Some managing authorities permit camping anywhere along the trail. Others permit camping only at designated sites. In some cases, the trail may already be open to use but

designated camping sites have not yet been established. Along such segments it may be difficult to find any place to camp legally. Overnight users are urged to plan their trip in advance to assure themselves proper accommodations. Above all, avoid trespassing and violating private property rights.

**Access.** Many points on or near the North Country NST are accessible by public transportation.

**Interpretive Facilities.** Various types of interpretive facilities—visitor centers, museums, exhibits, signs, etc.—are located at scenic and historic sites along the trail.

**Fishing.** A State fishing license is required in each State for fishing in lakes and streams along the trail.

**Hunting.** Many public and private lands through which the North Country Trail passes are legally open to hunting during the proper seasons. It is not intended that passage of the trail through these lands should in any way lead to their closure to hunting. In general, the trail will remain open to use during hunting seasons. However, some segments of the trail may be closed to use during some hunting seasons by the managing authorities responsible for those segments. Trail users should check in advance with the managing authority regarding use of specific trail segments during hunting seasons. Trail users are encouraged to wear "blaze orange" while using segments open to hunting.

**Administration.** The North Country NST is administered by the National Park Service in cooperation with many other public agencies, private organizations, and landowners. Additional general

information about the trail can be obtained by writing to the North Country National Scenic Trail, National Park Service, 700 Rayovac Drive - Suite 100, Madison, WI 53711. Detailed information about specific segments can be obtained by contacting the sources on the reverse side.



Volunteers build and maintain the trail